THE BIJAR CLAN OF THE GUJJAR TRIBE

The Bijar Gotra and the Caucaso-Iranic Migration Theory

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ABSTRACT

The Bijar clan constitutes one of the historically most significant and geographically widest-dispersed sub-groups of the Gujjar tribe. Drawing on classical Islamic sources — Mufti Abdul Ghani Al-Azhari Al-Shashi's *Qadeem Tarikh-e-Gujjar* and Molvi Muhammad Abdul Malik's *Shahan-e-Gujjar* — alongside Herodotus, Abu'l Ghazi's *Sharah-i-Tarakima*, the Chinese Muslim scholar Liu Zhi, and the seventh-century Spanish scholar Isidore of Seville, this article examines the clan's genealogical origins, ancient migrations, linguistic heritage, political formations, and outstanding personalities. It documents the unprecedented 1974–1977 period when the Presidents of both India and Pakistan were simultaneously Gujjars from the Bijar/Bajjar lineage — a fact confirmed by multiple independent sources. This article is intended as a verified scholarly reference for researchers, historians, and university students of South Asian, Middle Eastern, Caucasian, and Central Asian history.

I. LINEAGE AND ANCIENT ORIGINS

In his book *Qadeem Tarikh-e-Gujjar*, Mufti Abdul Ghani Al-Azhari Al-Shashi describes the Bijars as descendants of Hazrat Shem (Sem), a view endorsed by historian Molvi Muhammad Abdul Malik in *Shahan-e-Gujjar*. This tribe was initially found in the Bijar district of Kurdistan/Iran, Zarjan, and the Gorgos (Zagros) province of Iran.

The famous Greek historian Herodotus also identified the Huns who inhabited the Caucasian region — and later moved to Iran, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, and the Subcontinent — as Bijar. Within this framework, the Mirwani tribe in Iran and Afghanistan is recognised as part of the Bijar clan of the Gojar/Gujjar.

Regarding broader regional ancestries: Turks, Khazars, Chinese, Mongols, and Slavs are reported as descendants of Hazrat Japheth. The peoples of Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Arab world/Iran descend from Hazrat Shem, while the ancestors of Africans trace back to Hazrat Ham (Hem).

Abu'l Ghazi, in *Sharah-i-Tarakima*, notes that Ham's descendants went to Africa, Shem's to Iran, and Japheth's to the banks of the Itil and Yaik rivers, where he had eight sons: Turk, Khazar, Saqlab, Rus, Ming, Chin, Kemeri, and Tarikh.

In the 18th century, Chinese Sunni scholar Liu Zhi (a Hui Muslim) wrote that Japheth inherited China and Eastern Europe, Shem inherited Arabia and Iran, and Ham inherited Africa — a division similarly endorsed by the Spanish scholar Isidore of Seville in the 7th century CE.

Furthermore, Hindustan was named after Hind and Sindh after Sindh; both regions were inhabited by Ham's sons, Hind and Sindh, who are regarded as the ancestors of the people of the Subcontinent. *(References: Tarikh-i-Firishta and Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India Till the Year A.D. 1612.)*

Similarly, Targamos, the son of Hazrat Japheth, settled in the highlands of Armenia and its surrounding regions, from where his descendants later migrated eastward into the Indian Subcontinent.

II. LINGUISTIC MEANINGS AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS

The terms **Bajrani** and **Bijjar** are derived from the Kartvelian/Georgian word ■■■■■ (Bijar), meaning *brave* and *warrior people* — denoting a tribe known for its courage and martial prowess.

In Kartvelian languages, **'Bijar'** also translates as *wolf* — symbolising strong warrior traditions and expertise in horse breeding, a totemic identity shared with other Eurasian martial clans such as the Turkic Bozkurt (Grey Wolf) tradition.

In Kurdish (Kurmanji and Sorani) and Iranian, **'Bijar'** (■■■■■) means *'chief of a city'* or *'town,'* highlighting a distinct tribal identity rooted in loyalty and hospitality.

Historically, the Bijar clan of Gujjars has been known as warriors, administrators, and traders, establishing a presence spanning the Indian Subcontinent, Pakistan, Russia, southern China, Central Asian countries, Hungary, Germany, Spain, and Indonesia.

Variant Names Across Languages and Scripts

Language / Script	Form / Variant
Arabic / Urdu	■■■■■ (Bijar) / ■■■■ (Bajjar) / ■■■■■■ (Bajrani)
Hindi (Devanagari)	■■■■ (Bajjar)
Punjabi (Gurmukhi)	■■■■ (Bajjar)
Kartvelian / Georgian	■■■■■ (Bijar) — brave / warrior / wolf
Kurdish (Kurmanji)	Bijar / Bajar — chief of a city or town
English forms	Bijar · Bijjar · Bajjar · Bajrani · Bajjarani
Toponyms derived	Bijar (Iran) · Bajaur (KPK, Pakistan) · Bajaz (Iran)

III. HISTORICAL FIGURES AND REGIONAL FORTRESSES

Pharnavaz I of Kartli / Georgia (c. 302–237 BC) — Pharnavaz I was the founder of the Kingdom of Kartli (ancient Iberia, present-day Georgia) and the progenitor of the Pharnavazid dynasty. According to the medieval Georgian chronicle *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (The Life of the Georgian Kings, c. 800 CE), he rallied his people against Azon, the Macedonian governor appointed by Alexander the Great, defeated the Greek forces, killed Azon in battle, and established the independent Kingdom of Kartli around 302 BC. He is thus the **first idol-breaker (but-shikan) of Gurjistan/Georgia**. The Gujjar connection rests on the classical Persian name for Georgia — *Gurjistan* (attested by Yaqut al-Hamawi and Firishta) — and Mufti Al-Azhari's identification of Pharnavaz as belonging to the Gujjar/Gojar lineage that gave Gurjistan its name.

Sultan Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi — Saladin (1137–1193 CE) — Mufti Al-Azhari reports that Saladin, the renowned Muslim leader who led forces against the Crusaders and recaptured Jerusalem in 1187 CE, belonged to the Ayyubid Bijar clan of the Gurjar tribe. His father, Najm al-Din Ayyub, was a Bijar Gurjar who served as a general in the Seljuk Empire. Saladin founded the Ayyubid dynasty in 1171 CE and at its height controlled Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and portions of the Hejaz.

Qam Cheqay Fort, Bijar — The Medes and Sassanid Legacy — The oldest structure in Bijar is the Qam Cheqay fort, an ancient castle dating to the Medes and Sassanids era (200 BC–500 CE), representing a rare example of ancient Kurdish architecture. The Kurds, a traditionally nomadic people, historically herded goats and sheep across the highlands and plains of Mesopotamia (modern-day Iran and Turkey), mirroring the pastoral lifestyle of the Gurjars in the Subcontinent and ancient Georgia. These nomadic tribes embraced Islam in the 7th century CE. Bijar's modern history began in the 1500s when it was annexed by the Safavid Empire. Throughout history, the region has remained renowned for its thousands-of-years-old tradition of rug weaving — giving 'Bijar carpets' their international designation as *'the iron rugs of Persia.'*

IV. DYNASTIC CONNECTIONS AND SUBCONTINENT MIGRATIONS

The Bijar clan originated from the Caucasian and Gojar regions of Mt. Judi and the Zagros mountainous region of Kurdistan, subsequently migrating to Iran, Iraq, Baluchistan, and Sindh.

In the Indian context, Bijar (also known as Bhatti) is written as ■■■■ (Bajjar) in Hindi and ■■■■ (Bajjar) in Indian Punjabi, representing a subgroup of the Gurjar Chandravanshi (Lunar Dynasty) caste. Some Indian historians state that the Bijars descend from King Yadu, the founder of the Yadava dynasty — a confederacy of clans known for pastoral traditions that ruled the Mathura region and played a significant role in Indian history during the 12th to 14th centuries before being overrun by the Delhi Sultanate.

Historian Dr. R.R. Khajuria identifies the Bajjar, Chhala, Barana, Kasana, and Gorsi clans as Kshatriya Surya Vanshi Gujjars. Genealogical records additionally link the Bajjar clan to the Gehlot dynasty of Marwar, alongside clans such as the Ahariya, Mangliya, Sood, Bagri, and Patel.

In later migrations, Bajjar Gujjars settled in Mansehra, Battagram, and Jammu & Kashmir, producing prominent figures including **Chaudhry Fazal Elahi** (5th President of Pakistan, 1973–1978), **Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed** (5th President of India, 1974–1977), and **Atta-ur-Rehman Chishti** (British MP).

Historical texts by Mufti Abdul Ghani Al-Azhari and Herodotus suggest the Bajjar clan originally resided in Zagros, Persia, and later founded the Bijar state bordering Faras and Balkh. While some historians link them to the Gehlot family, others classify them under the Anzan tribes — rulers of Western Iran — alongside groups like the Bazargadi, Marani, and Durozi Gujjars.

Hindu writers tracing Bajjar Khel Gujjars identify Raja Jagdeo (grandson of Raja Jaipal) with Raja Bajjar as the eponymous ancestor. This clan established major settlements in Bajaur (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Bijar (Kurdistan, Sulaymaniyah Governorate), Gujrat (Punjab), and Iran (Bajaz city).

V. ETHNO-LINGUISTIC AND GENETIC LINKAGES

The Bijar (Beejar/Bijarani) Gujjar gotra is consistently associated with a Persian-Iranic origin theory rather than a pure Sanskrit derivation. The name directly resembles Bijar (■■■■■), the historic city in Iranian Kurdistan linked with old Kurdish-Persian dialects. Historians connect these groups with the ancient pastoral tribes of the Zagros Mountains, Armenia, and the Caucasus, proposing an eastward migration pattern through Persia and Afghanistan into South Asia.

While mainstream linguists derive the broader term Gurjar/Gujjar from the Sanskrit *Gurjara*, alternative theories connect it to Persian-Iranic roots, *Gurjistan* (Georgia/the land of the Gurj) in the Caucasus, or the Turkic word *Goecer* meaning 'nomad' or 'herdsman.' This migratory framework is often compared to the background of Sultan Saladin Ayyubi's Kurdish ancestors, who originated near Dvin (Davin) — the medieval capital of Christian Armenia.

Ancient DNA studies from the Armenian Highlands, Dvin, the Ararat plain, and the South Caucasus indicate that the region's early paternal lineages were primarily linked with ancient Indo-European and West Asian populations rather than Arabian Peninsula populations. Among the prominent lineages identified is **Haplogroup R1b-Z2103**, which is associated with Bronze Age Yamnaya-related migrations into the Caucasus and Armenian Highlands around 3000–2000 BC.

Researchers connect Haplogroup R1b-Z2103 with early Indo-European-speaking pastoral groups, horse culture, and steppe-related migrations. Because Saladin Ayyubi's family originated from the Dvin region before moving into Iraq, researchers use these genetic findings to argue that the broader Caucasus-Armenian frontier preserved strong Indo-European and Iranic ancestral influences, which later blended into Kurdish and Islamic identities.

VI. NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF THE BIJAR / BAJJAR GUJJAR CLAN

Personality	Historical Role and Verified Sources
Pharnavaz I of Kartli (c.302–237 BC)	Founder of the Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia/Georgia); defeated Alexander's governor Azon; first but-shikan (idol-breaker) of Gurjistan; reformed the Georgian alphabet. Identified in Gujjar tradition as belonging to the Gujjar/Gojar lineage. (Georgian Chronicles; Mufti Al-Azhari Al-Shashi)
Salah al-Din / Saladin (1137–1193 CE)	Sultan of Egypt and Syria; founder of the Ayyubid dynasty (1171 CE); recaptured Jerusalem in 1187 CE; central figure of the Third Crusade. His father Najm al-Din Ayyub described as Bijar Gujjar general in the Seljuk army. (Mufti Abdul Ghani Al-Azhari Al-Shashi, Qadeem Tarikh-e-Gujjar)
Raja Jayapala (9th–10th c. CE)	Ruler of Hindu Shahi / Gandhara kingdom; led resistance against Ghaznavid invasions.
Raja Anandapala (10th–11th c. CE)	Son of Jayapala; continued Hindu Shahi rule; formed anti-Ghaznavid coalition (c.1008 CE).
Ch. Fazal Elahi 5th President of Pakistan (1973–1978)	Born 1 January 1904, Marala village, Kharian Tehsil, Gujrat District, Punjab — into an influential Bajjar Gujjar Muslim family. First legislatively elected President of Pakistan under the 1973 Constitution. (Wikipedia; gujjars.wordpress.com; PrideofPakistan.com)
Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed 5th President of India (1974–1977)	Born 13 May 1905, Hauz Qazi, Old Delhi, in a Muslim Gujjar family (father Lt. Col. Zalnur Ali Ahmed, Gujjar surgeon in Indian Medical Service). Served as President of India 1974–1977; died in office 11 February 1977. (Alchetron; Bharat Mata Mandir Museum; Wikipedia)
Atta-ur-Rehman Chishti	British Member of Parliament of Bajjar Gujjar origin; prominent in Pakistani diaspora politics in the United Kingdom.

VII. THE TWIN PRESIDENCIES — AN UNPRECEDENTED HISTORICAL RECORD

One of the most remarkable facts about the Bijar/Bajjar Gujjar clan is the simultaneous occupancy of the highest offices of state in both India and Pakistan by Gujjar leaders during 1974–1977 — an unprecedented record in the political history of the Subcontinent.

PAKISTAN	INDIA
Chaudhry Fazal Elahi *5th President of Pakistan* 14 August 1973 – 16 September 1978 *Bajjar Gujjar · Marala village, Kharian Tehsil, Gujrat District, Punjab* First legislatively elected President of Pakistan	**Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed** *5th President of India* 24 August 1974 – 11 February 1977 *Muslim Gujjar · Hauz Qazi, Old Delhi* Second Muslim President of India · Died in office

Overlap period: 24 August 1974 to 11 February 1977. During this period, Gujjar Muslim men simultaneously held the Presidency of both India and Pakistan — a coincidence unparalleled in the history of either nation or of the broader Subcontinent.

EDITORIAL / SCHOLARLY NOTE

Source Verification: *Fazal Elahi's Bajjar Gujjar identity is confirmed by Wikipedia, gujjars.wordpress.com, and PrideofPakistan.com. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's Gujjar identity is confirmed by Alchetron ('born in Muslim Gujjar family at Hauz Qazi, Old Delhi'), the Bharat Mata Mandir freedom fighters' museum ('father Lt. Colonel Zulnur Ali Ahmed, a Gujjar surgeon in the Indian Medical Service'), and PraBook.com. Both are classified as Gujjar by three or more independent sources.*

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Bijar clan of the Gujjar tribe has one of the most historically verifiable and geographically extensive records of any sub-group within the Gujjar tribal confederacy. Its documented history spans approximately four millennia — from the ancient Zagros mountain peoples through the Median Empire, the Kingdom of Kartli/Georgia (founded by Pharnavaz), the Ayyubid Caliphate under Saladin, the Hindu Shahi dynasty, and into the modern era — culminating in the unprecedented simultaneous Gujjar Presidencies of both India and Pakistan from 1974 to 1977.

The clan's remarkable geographical dispersal — from the Caucasus and Zagros to Punjab, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe — reflects the ancient pastoralist mobility of the Gujjar and their consistent role as warriors, administrators, traders, and artisans across multiple civilisational contexts. It is hoped that this article will serve as a reliable scholarly foundation for further historical inquiry at university level and beyond.

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